



First Blood



98 9 14

Chapter 1 by Oxyscapist

He had surrendered his soul. Or at least he had given up the hope of saving it. He had been lying there, cooped up in his room for almost a week now. He wanted to retch at his disgusting and spineless life. But then as almost every great narrative of human spirit begins with an innocuous thought, he resolved to turn his weakness into his elixir of life. He would beat the devil at his game.

Chapter 2 by Joakim



His first step would be to shave and shower for the first time in a week.

"Moooooooooom, I need a fresh towel!"

At 24 years old, he still had his whole life ahead of him and he felt a surge of power in his mind and body. It was time to test the body out, he had become pale, fat and very tired. This week had been the crescendo of years of depression. It was either suicide or actually facing himself in the mirror. He was tired of hiding, tired of feeling like a loser.

He went outside for the first time in two months.

Chapter 3 by HappyPills



It was not any different than how he remembered it: hot, open, and full of insects. Now he remembered why he had stayed indoors for all that time and was urged to go back in.

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decided continue on his way without stopping to say hello. And so, he wandered off into his neighborhood... who knew what he would come across?

Chapter 4 by Cat4055



As he walked around the block he saw things he didn't remember being there. Two headed dogs. The sun started smiling at him. Clouds gave the middle finger to people, what was going on!?

Chapter 5 by Time



"You're here, too?" A whisper came from the left hand side of him, "We thought that you didn't come."

Steve turned to see a boy who seemed to be at most 10 years old standing right beside him. He couldn't recognize the boy in any way.

"Who are you?" He couldn't help but ask although he knew that it was kind of rude, "Sorry, I don't remember you being here."

"That's fine," The boy smiled, "Technically, this is the first time we met each other. I haven't seen you before too, it was just that I knew that you the one, since I have never seen you before."

"You don't speak like a ten years old."

"Because my appearance doesn't indicate my real age, silly. I just *look* small, doesn't mean that I *am* small. Here in this dimension, people stop aging, and--"

"Wait," Steve cut in, "But I have only been in my house for at most two months! And--this dimension?"

"Look, it's a weird place. Time flows at different speed in different places. In your house, it's two months, but outside, it's twenty years."

Steve couldn't handle if he should have been told that these sounded like a child's daydream, but the boy's eyes were so serious that he knew that wasn't the case.

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"Now, look, obviously, you're the one whom people have been talking about all day long so--"

"Which one?"

"The one who was believed to survive," He sighed, "But obviously, it was only rumors. You're as dead as any other person here in this neighborhood."

"Wait--dead?" Steve only stared, "How am I dead?"

"You don't even know that you are dead?" The boy shrugged, "Didn't the voice tell you?"

For a moment, Steve had the feeling that the boy was only playing with him, that it was only the ridiculous day dreams of a child, but then he remembered all the weird creatures that he saw in his garden: Two headed dogs, hot, boiling lava under the grass, the clouds that seemed to gain their own minds...

How could it all be true? But he knew that he saw all these, and the deeper part of his minded, somehow, tended to believe the boy's words.

"What voice?" He asked, "I didn't hear any voice for like, a week!"

He saw the shiny glimmer in the boy's eyes fade. "That's not right," the boy murmured, "Look, if you haven't received the voice, you are not yet dead, but if you're alive, you can't be here!"

"Perhaps I was too distracted to even hear anything," Steve muttered, "Anyways, how in the world is everyone here dead?"

"Well, not exactly dead! Not yet dead! But we will die in the end anyways," The boy smiled, "Look, here we are in another dimension. This dimension is the counterpart of the one that we originally lived in, and we call it the Dimension of Dreams."

"Dreams?" Steve repeated, "This is...another dimension?"

"Yep," The boy replied, "One of us brought everyone here, but we have no idea who that is. You see, there are some people who have the special talent of bringing others into another

dimension in their dreams. The only way you can ever leave this place and be back to our own dimension is to kill the one."

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"Kill?" Steve gasped, "What? Kill? Who? Where? How? Why? Here?"

"Well, dying here is meaningless, and if you die, you just get revived within an hour. But dying in the normal way here won't bring us back. There's a sword here specialized for killing people here, and if you're killed by the sword, you will truly die in real life, even your soul will be destroyed."

Steve only stayed silent, still in the great shock of the other dimension and all these unbelievable facts stated to him.

"Now, follow me. We've got things to do. Important things." An unfamiliar smile burnt past the boy's face, and Steve could see something other than happiness in the eerie smile. What was it?

"What things?"

"Execution," The sun was radiating heat to the place, but Steve couldn't feel the warmth, "Look, you must be the one who brought us here. No one else did it."

Chapter 6 by Oxyscapist



Steve had to think fast. The cobwebs infesting his mind needed to be stripped down. Quickly and violently. His befuddled buffoon act had held up for now. But if he had any wish to live, he will have to break out of this neurological torture chamber.

It had taken him all of two minutes after the contact to spot the simulation. It was the conversations that always gave it away. You see, the AI was still to master the unimaginable unpredictability of human dialogues. One could always spot the algorithmic patterns hiding behind the seemingly human responses with the right questioning. And Steve was the best at it.

It had actually been a clever plan - create a fantastical universe so detached from the reality that the mind will miss the more deadlier charade. Very clever - radical even. His eyes twinkled with the merest hints of mirth. He might have an idea of who his captor was.

The boy was already on his way. Steve scrambled to catch up to him. His mind working at

multiple levels. After all, he had to plan the greatest jailbreak ever now.

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